

Sample News Coverage

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CALFED hearing attracts big crowd

■ More people showed up at the CALFED public hearing in Redding than at any of the other 12 statewide hearings held thus far, officials said.

By Candace L. Brown
R-S staff reporter

If there was one event that had no trouble competing with Thursday night's final episode of "Seinfeld," it was the CALFED public hearing in Redding.

About 200 people crammed into a conference room in the Double-Tree Hotel on Hilltop Drive — the largest turnout at any of CALFED's 12 public hearings thus far, said moderator Joe Bodovitz.

Almost 50 men and women addressed a panel of officials that included CALFED's executive director, Lester Snow. Speakers were limited to three minutes each.

"This is a bumper crop," Bodovitz said.

He expressed disappointment that participants at the various hearings — held all over the state — can't listen to one another express their views about CALFED's plan to fix problems in the bay-delta.

"Everyone feels misunderstood," he said.

During the meeting, which started at 7 p.m. and continued past 9 p.m., Northern California residents — from county supervisors to retirees to fishing guides — stepped up to the microphone to talk about what they see as problems with CALFED's programs.

The 3-year-old group of 15 state and federal agencies recently released a 2,400-page draft programmatic Environmental Impact

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Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIR/EIS).

The document — which the public has until July 1 to comment on — looks at three alternatives to fix water quality and environmental problems that plague the hub of the state's water system.

Ralph Modine, a Trinity County supervisor, asked CALFED to include the Trinity River Basin in its assessment of what makes up the bay-delta watershed. A watershed is the area that is drained by a river system.

Although the Trinity River dumps about 1 million acre-feet of water into the Sacramento River each year, it was not included on CALFED's maps, he said.

Jack Trout, a fly-fishing guide in Mount Shasta, and Steve Evans, conservation director of Friends of the River, spoke about the impacts of enlarging the size of Shasta Dam.

The controversial proposal is one option CALFED is studying as a way to increase the amount of water that can be stored in Northern California.

Orland residents Dell and Holly Reimers expressed skepticism about the proposed canal that makes draft Alternative 3 stand out to many north state residents. The 42-mile-long structure would pump water from Hood, about 15 miles south

of Sacramento, directly south, along the east edge of the delta.

"The numbers don't add up," Holly Reimers said, quoting a figure of 7.3 million acre-feet of water per year that could be coming just through the canal. "Where's this water going to come from? It's not here."

Building more reservoirs — throughout the state — was a common theme among speakers.

"We feel that it's absolutely necessary to provide for additional storage," said Jim Chapin of the SHasta Alliance for Resources and the Environment.

It was a topic CALFED's Snow addressed at the start of the public hearing.

"Except for the peripheral canal, the issue of storage has probably become the most controversial," he said, mentioning environmental concerns with building more structures that impact fish and wildlife. "Storage is still clearly on the table. We are evaluating it."

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CALFED timeline

The CALFED process was recently lengthened by about nine months, with the extension of a public comment period and plans to issue a revised draft instead of a final report by the end of the year.

■ May 28: public hearings end in Santa Rosa.

■ July 1: public comment period ends on CALFED's draft programmatic environmental impact statement/environmental impact report.

■ By the end of the year, CALFED plans to issue a revised draft programmatic EIS/EIR, which will identify a draft preferred alternative.

■ The public will have at least 90 days to comment on the revised draft before a final programmatic EIR/EIS is prepared.

■ Phase III of the CALFED process is implementation of the preferred alternative, expected to happen over several decades.

For more information about CALFED, check the Internet at calfed.ca.gov. To get copies of the draft EIS/EIR, call (800) 900-3587. Mail comments to CALFED Bay-Delta Program, 1416 Ninth St., Suite 1155, Sacramento, CA 95814; Attn.: Rick Breitenbach.